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habits, and moderate in his desires, he gives her little trouble, and even that little he is at all times anxious to abridge. His cup of tea or coffee morning and evening is nearly all in the way of cookery that he requires at her hands. Quietly he comes in and quietly he goes out, and he never does either without saying something kind or civil as he passes. In all things easily pleased, he expresses thanks for every little attention shown him, and never raises his voice in anger, never even in querulousness or impatience. To every one around him, without distinction of rank or worldly circumstances, he is all politeness, all gentleness, and all kindness.

Who can but love and respect the decayed old gentleman!

C.

THE ITALIAN ORGAN BOY.

PART FIRST.

THE streets of a great city, whether swept by the tumultuous tide of life by day, or echoing only to the dull and solitary tread of the patrol by night, are never devoid of material for interesting remark or rumination to such as are so disposed. He must, indeed, be a man of sluggish sensibilities and slender fancy who could traverse any of our great thoroughfares without finding them occasionally touched by some of the thousand little tales of anxiety or satisfaction, mourning or merriment, legible in brief upon the faces of the motley and many-featured throng around him, or at least, by the supplemental aid of a little imagination, plausibly constructed from the elements thereby supplied. There is perhaps no period so well fitted for these studies of life, as it is in its private and more important aspect, as the close of one of our short and busy winter days, when the pressure of diurnal toil is removed from men's minds, whether its effect has been to sway them from the contemplation of joy or wretchedness, and unbiassed they are left to imprint their character on the countenance of each. When does cheerfulness appear so undiluted as when a long winter evening's recreation spreads out before it, whether spent within the mellowed glow of a happy domestic hearth, with all its easy, pure, and unsuspecting pleasures, or in the social reunion with its friendly, careless, and unclouded gaiety? and when does wretchedness feel so blank and dismal as when a weary length of dim and rayless hours gives space for all its melancholy broodings, undiverted by occupation, unmitigated by that spirit of hope which more or less mingles with the temperament of all by day, as if a constituent of the glad light of heaven in which we then live and move. A cursory reading of the countenance of each passer by will at this hour give the poorest physiognomist no inaccurate notion of the complexion of his domestic lot; and, selecting an individual from the homeward-wending crowd, I often form my speculation as to the scene that awaits him, follow him in the freedom of all-privileged and all-pervading thought across the threshold of his abode, conjure up the circumstances of his reception, glance through the perspective of his evening arrangements, and, as I find them agreeable or the reverse, extend or curtail my domiciliary inspection.

During a recent winter, on one of its most cheerless evenings, I was thus exercising my discernment and my fancy in a long homeward walk through the centre of the city, and mentally apportioning to each that attracted my eye the share of satisfaction or discomfort that lay before him—my own mind subject to the lights and shadows, the glow and chill, which in various degrees were suggested as the lot of each. It was precisely the evening to lend the keenest zest to the happiness of the light-hearted, and a more poignant bitterness to the misery of the unfortunate. A cold icy wind whistled shrilly through every narrow street and entry as I passed it, and swept more boldly down the wider spaces, bearing, occasionally, slanting showers of sleet, which a glance at the dun and overcharged canopy of snow-clouds and of smoke above showed to be but premonitory intimations of a heavy and continuous fall. For the most part, all below was impatient motion and occupied expectation, because almost all had a goal in view to which they hastened, the fierce inclemency of the weather impelling alike the mirthful and the melancholy onward. The well-fed, well-defended passenger, with muffled neck and arms thrust to the elbow in the pockets of his dreadnought, rubbed shoulders with the half-paralyzed and shivering wretch that shuffled amid the hurrying throng, often apparently without other object than that of joining in the stream of fellow-creatures, whom he could resemble in no other way. Carriage after carriage rolled past, the chil-

dren of affluence for their tenants, interchanging careless comments, or looking with languid and heedless gaze upon the squalid, the impoverished, the abandoned, the degraded, that, alas! met the eye so often as to account for, and almost justify, the indifference displayed.

"What a collocation, not merely of the extremes of human condition, but of almost every interposed gradation!" thought I, as, sated with the multiform instances presented in the concourse, and half bewildered with the medley of sights and sounds—the glittering ostentation of the glaring shops, the hum and tramp of the jostling crowd, the din and rattle of ceaseless vehicles, from the lumbering dray to the elastic carriage, the oft-mingled appeal of importunate mendicants, and, not least confounding, the sleet-laden and staggering blasts that met me with wild caprice at almost every corner—I gladly turned aside into a more sheltered and less frequented street, to pursue a route of greater ease, though at the expense of a greater circuit. But misery in the aggregate can generally be encountered with less disturbance than when submitted to in the case of solitary sufferers; and before I had proceeded half the length of a private and comparatively deserted street, I had more effective calls upon my charity—there was at that time no legal provision for the necessitous—than when passing among the abounding instances of destitution I had just witnessed. My stock of small change, and I must add, co-equally therewith, that of my patience too, was nearly exhausted, when my eye fell upon the figure of a young lad, who stood indifferently sheltered from the wind under the projected doorway of an uninhabited house. I had made up my mind to the customary solicitation: but he seemed so abstracted as not to notice my approach, and, pitying the forlorn looking youth, and wondering at his forbearance, I walked slowly past, to give him an opportunity. I found him to be an organ-player, for the instrument, unslung from his shoulders, rested upon the flag at his feet, and a brief notice of his collapsed but characteristic features showed him to be an Italian. A shivering marmoset, partly covered by his jacket, was lodged on the hollow of one arm, while the other, resting on his raised knee, supported his head, as, unconscious of my proximity and observation, he gazed fixedly upon the ground. The sight of mute personal privation and friendless loneliness would at such a crisis have been influential enough to stir up whatever humanity one had, but when witnessed in a stranger from a far land, in one, too, nurtured under the sapphire skies and blissful clime of Italy, and withering now by a dismal change beneath such dense and murky clouds, and such a pitiless and scourging breeze, the demand on one's kindly offices was irresistible, and, drawing near to the desolate lad, I accompanied a small gift with a few words in his own most musical and thrilling tongue. He started from his musing posture as the electric syllables struck upon his ear, and, as he gazed with keen enthusiasm upon me, the blood mantled vividly upon his chilled and weather-wrinkled cheek, while with grateful but melancholy earnestness he poured out his thanks. There was something to me unusually touching in the aspect of the friendless young foreigner, as well as in the circumstances in which I found him. He had a cast of thought and maturity in his face which hardship, isolation, and self-dependence, seemed to have anticipated years in producing; for his slender and stripling figure, and the unshaven down upon his lip, bespoke him still in an early stage of youth. After a word or two of compassion, I passed on. But his dashed and disappointed look at separation followed me: my conscience chid me for resting in a cold gratuity to one so dejected, yet so sensitive to relief—a spring of gladness for whom my acquaintance with his native language, it appeared, could so easily unseal.

He was a stranger, weary, friendless, cheerless, and necessitous—unsusceptible of those mitigations of suffering which even the poorest experience among their own people and their own kindred. I was hastening to my unshared, 'tis true, but far, therefore, from joyless lodgings, an abundant board, a radiant fire, a storm and snow proof apartment, furnished with all the appliances of comfort which winter covets; and would they be diminished by the admission of this homeless, and, from his countenance, I dare certify, guileless wanderer, to share for a time their influence? No. I have it in my power to interpose one bright spot in his life of hardship and privation, to suspend for a while the yearnings with which doubtless, at this hour of dreariness and suffering, he turns in thought to the scenes of his but recent childhood in his own lovely land, to the sunny azure skies the joyous vine-

clad hills, the playmates that even now, perhaps, at the close of a bright and genial day, are clustering in merry meeting for the evening song and dance, his father's cottage, his mother's caress. "Yes, I will turn back," exclaimed I, "and enable him, if ever he rejoin the social circle in his own ardent home, to tell his eager listeners a trait of kindness and sympathy shared in the far off frigid country of the north." As I concluded, I again stood before him, as with a shiver and a sigh the poor lad was about raising his organ upon his shoulder again; and, telling him that I had been in and loved the land from which he came, that I was fond of its people, and of their music too, and wished to talk with and hear him play at leisure and in comfort by my own fireside, asked him to accompany me to it. A smile of gladness lighted up his pale expressive face as he gratefully declared his readiness; and a car passing at the moment, I hailed it, and in a few seconds, young Carlo Girardi—for that he told me was his name—his chattering and half perished marmoset, his muffled music mill, and my enlivened and approving self, were rattling rapidly to my lodgings. I found him a fine, intelligent, unhacknied lad, to whose fervid heart my partial knowledge of his native tongue secured me ready access; and, after cold and hunger had given way to fire and food, I experienced no difficulty in drawing from him an ingenuous and vivid narration of his personal story—one so singular and romantic in its character, and so illustrative of the purest impulses of the human heart, as to merit a repetition better than many a more highly wrought and complex tale. Cleared of the circumlocution caused by his indifferent stock of English, and converted into a dialect more uniform and familiar to our ears, it ran substantially thus:—

"I come from the neighbourhood of the little village of Montanio, at the foot of the great Appennines. My father was, and I pray is still, a small vine-grower and gardener, supplying the market of Telese, and other towns within reach, with fruits, flowers, and vegetables. We were a family of five—my father, my dear mother, my elder and only brother Ludovico, my beautiful and gentle sister Bianca, and myself;" and his tone grew touchingly tremulous, as, in connection with his cottage home, he went over the old, familiar, household names. "Oh, that I was ever called upon to leave them to wander, unfriended and unknown, among rough and careless strangers, to forsake all pleasant things, the gay and glad green fields, the sunny hills, the sparkling mountain streams, the flowered and fruited gardens, and the ever bright and beautiful sky which stretched its unclouded azure overhead, for this cold and shivering, this dim and misty land! But yet I would do as much again, if such a call again were made upon me—dark shame upon me if I hesitated!—and when I return to them once more—and oh, may heaven grant that now I shortly may!—I will look with the greater rapture upon all I left, upon beauties and on blessings I then too little, far too little, cared for. My father was ever kind to us when we were in the way of obedience to his wishes and ideas of duty, but rigid and severe to resent every error we might commit. I have heard the elder neighbours say that in his own young days he had been wild and perverse, and entangled thereby in many troubles, and that, therefore, in affection and providence for us, he was the more exact in our care and education. I was too young to be much in the way of following my own bent, and so had little opportunity of offending him; but my brother Ludovico, who was hot, daring, and adventurous, was often led to look for wild and irregular excitement with the roving hunters and rude shepherds from the mountains above, and his mingling in their lawless society always raised my father's resentment, and, despite my mother's exerted influence, often brought disquiet and disunion among us. But though reckless and unsettled, Ludovico was ever frank, winsome, and honest-hearted, which, however, could not save him from sharing in the evil fame of his companions; and though his handsome figure, open temper, and ready offices for all who sought them, made him a favourite with the young, yet the elder looked grave and severe upon him, as one already committed in the road to ruin. Our sister Bianca, who, not in our eyes only, was the sweetest and prettiest maiden within the circle of a league, drew to herself, as she grew up, the admiring looks of all; and at our gay village festivals, at the sowing, vintage, and noted holidays, he was a happy and envied youth who could oftenest engage her hand for the tarantula, or follow her voice upon the mandoline. But the one who paid his court with most success was Francesco, the only son of Marcolini the wealthy miller, who was by far the

richest man in our community. But when his son's courtship became known to him, he forthwith fell into a rage at the notion of so imprudent a match, for he was a purse-proud man, who valued his gold above most other things, above the beauty and innocence of our Bianca, and the pledged affection of Francesco, for whom he looked far above us humble people for a more equally dowered bride. Resolute to extinguish his folly as he called it, at once, he solemnly vowed to cut him off with a carlino, if he pursued his thriftless project; and, not assured that even this would deter him, he determined to engage, likewise, the authority of my father, whose strict and unswerving character was well known to him, and accordingly besought him to lay his prohibition upon Bianca. My father, who would have scorned to force a thus forbidden union, hurried to comply with his wishes; and in Bianca's obedience there was found a surer safeguard than in Francesco's fear of poverty, as, even in defiance of his father's menace, he vehemently urged my sister to become his, and trust to the labour of his hands for their maintenance. But my father's injunctions were habitually paramount; and poor Francesco, finding her hesitation not to be overcome, soon fell into despair and declining health. He became melancholy, faint-hearted, and neglectful of all his old occupations; and his strange and moody habits, quenched spirits, and fast failing strength, so wrought upon his father's fear and affection, that he began to think it better to make some compromise, and forego a little of his ambition rather than endanger Francesco's life. In consequence, he intimated to my father that on reflection he was disposed to forward the marriage, provided a certain sum, which he named, was settled upon Bianca, as it was scarcely to be expected, he urged, that he would give his son and the heir of all his money to a portionless bride. My father acknowledged his request to be but natural, but professed at once the insufficiency of his means to satisfy it without impoverishing the rest of his family; an act which, however devoted to the happiness of his daughter, conscience would not allow him to commit.

Old Martolini, finding him intractable upon the point, proposed then, that as Bianca and Francesco were still very young, their marriage should be postponed for at least three years, at the end of which time, if he were prepared to give her a certain portion—making a large abatement from his first demand—it might with his consent take place. But, exasperated at his disappointment and forced concession, he added a passionate oath, that on no other terms would he hear of the connection, even though his son Francesco were such a fool as to pine till it brought him to his death-bed. My father, balanced between his anxiety to close an arrangement so beneficial to Bianca, and his sense of the hardships and extreme frugality it would necessarily impose upon us all during the interval, desired a short time to make his decision. The same evening he called all of us, except my sister, to him—declared the proposal of Francesco's father—asked our opinion separately upon it—and when with one voice we all professed our readiness, our eagerness, to undergo any and every additional labour and privation that might take a tear from our gentle Bianca's eye, or add a blush or a smile to her now pallid cheek and lips, he answered, "It is just spoken as I would have you speak, my dear wife and children: but saying is easy, doing difficult. Three years will give you many opportunities of proving this, for there must be much denial, frugality, and toil, brief nights and long and busy days, to enable us to accumulate within the time a sum so ill proportioned to our means." Bianca was then informed of the arrangement, and smiles of re-kindled hope and rapture mingled with tears of grateful love and sensibility; and her rapidly returning bloom and gaiety gilded every thing around with its own gladness, and rendered our ruder and scantier fare and more lengthened labour pleasanter at times than the merry meeting and the music, which we could now of course but rarely join. The impulse of affection for dear Bianca was strong in every heart, and this, with the prospect of a happy completion of our undertaking, almost changed every sacrifice into a delight. But, young though I be, I have now lived long enough to know, that as the brightest morning sky is often overcast before the close of day, so are our most shining hopes subject to many a cloud and chill before, if ever, they attain to their fulfilment." (Here poor Carlo paused for a moment in his narrative; and with your leave, gentle reader, I too shall rest, till I have the pleasure of meeting you again in next week's Journal.)